iani, he was accustomed to reply—"He is one who loves to give entertainments, and who serves up music at his theatre as he would pheasants on his table."

It was one in the morning before the company separated. "Anzoleto," said Corilla, when alone with him in the embrasure of the balcony, "where do you live?" At this unexpected inquiry, Anzoleto grew pale and red almost at the same moment; for how could he confess to the rich and fascinating beauty before him, that he had in a manner neither house nor home? Even this response would have been easier than to mention the miserable den where he was in the habit of taking refuge, when neither inclination nor necessity obliged him to pass the night in the open air.

"Well, what is there so extraordinary in my question?" said Corilla, laughing.

"I am asking myself," replied Anzoleto, with much presence of mind, "what royal or fairy palace were fitting home for the happy mortal who is honored by a glance from Corilla."

"What does all this flattery mean?" said she, darting on him one of the most bewitching glances contained in the storehouse of her charms.

"That I have not that honor," replied the young man; "but that, if I had, I should be content only to float between earth and sky, like the stars."

"Or like the *cuccali*," said the songstress, bursting into a fit of laughter. It is well known that gulls (*cuccali*) are proverbially simple, and to speak of their awkwardness, in the language of Venice, is equivalent to saying, in ours, "As stupid as a goose."

"Ridicule me—despise me," replied Anzoleto; "I would rather that you should do so than not think of me at all."

"Well, then," said she, "since you must reply in metaphors, I shall take you with me in my gondola; and if I take you away from your abode, instead of taking you to it, it will be your own fault."

"If that be your motive for inquiry, my answer is brief and explicit: my home is on the steps of your palace."

"Go then, and await me on the stairs below," said Corilla, lowering her voice; "for Zustiniani may blame the indulgence with which I have listened to your nonsense."

In the first impulse of his vanity Anzoleto disappeared, and darting towards the landing-place of the palace, to the prow of Corilla's gondola, counted the moments by the beating of his fevered pulse. But before she appeared on the steps of the palace, many thoughts had passed through the anxious and ambitious brain of the débutant "Corilla," said he to himself, "is all powerful; but if by pleasing her I were to displease the count, or if, in virtue of my too easy triumph, I were to destroy her power, and disgust him altogether with so inconstant a beauty——"

In the midst of these perplexing thoughts, Anzoleto measured with a glance the stair which he might yet remount, and was planning how to effect his escape, when torches gleamed under the portico, and the beautiful Corilla, wrapped in an ermine cloak, appeared upon the upper steps, amid a group of cavaliers, anxious to support her rounded elbow in the hollow of their hand, and in this manner to assist her to descend, as is the custom in Venice.

"Well," said the gondolier of the prima donna to the confounded Anzoleto, "what are you doing there? Make haste into the gondola if you have permission; if not, proceed on your way, for my lord count is with the signora.'

Anzoleto threw himself into the bottom of the gondola, without knowing what he did. He was stupefied. But scarcely did he find himself there, when he fancied the amazement and indignation which the count would feel, should he enter into the gondola with Corilla, and find there his insolent protegé. His cruel anxiety was protracted for several minutes. The signora had stopped about half-way down the staircase; she was laughing and talking with those about her, and, in discussing a musical phrase, she repeated it in several different ways. Her clear and thrilling voice died away amid the palaces and cupolas of the canal, as the crow of the cock before the dawn, is lost in the silence of the open country.

Anzoleto, unable to contain himself, resolved to escape by the opening of the gondola which was farthest from the stair. He had already thrust aside the glass in its panel of black velvet, and had passed one leg through the opening, when the second rower of the prima donna, who was stationed at the stern, leaning over the edge of the little cabin, said in a low voice, "They are singing—that is as much as to say, 'You may wait without being afraid.'"

"I did not know the usual custom," thought Anzoleto, who still tarried, not without some mixture of consternation. Corilla amused herself by bringing the count as far as the side of the gondola, and kept him standing there, while she repeated the "*felicissima notte*," until she had left the shore. She then came and placed herself beside her new admirer, with as much ease and self-possession as if his life and her own fortune had not been at stake.

"Look at Corilla," said Zustiniani to the Count Barberigo. "Well, I would wager my head that she is not alone in yonder gondola."

"And why do you think so?" replied Barberigo.

"Because she asked me a thousand times to accompany her to her palace."

"Is that your jealousy?"

"Oh, I have been long free from that weakness. I should be right glad if our prima donna would take a fancy to some one who would prevent her from leaving Venice as she sometimes threatens. I could console myself for her desertion of me, but I could neither replace her voice nor her talents, nor the ardor with which she inspires the public at San Samuel."

"I understand; but who, then, is the happy favorite of this mad princess?"

The count and his friend enumerated all whom Corilla appeared to encourage during the evening. Anzoleto was absolutely the only one whom they failed to think of.

CHAPTER V.

A VIOLENT struggle arose in the breast of the happy lover, who agitated and palpitating, was borne on the waters through the tranquil night, with the most celebrated beauty of Venice. Anzoleto was transported by his ardor, which gratified vanity rendered still more

powerful. On the other hand, the fear of displeasing, of being scornfully dismissed and impeached, restrained his impetuosity. Prudent and cunning, like a true Venetian as he was, he had not aspired to the theatre for more than six years, without being well informed as to the fantastic and imperious woman who governed all its intrigues. He was well assured that his reign would be of short duration, and if he did not withdraw from this dangerous honor, it was because he was taken in a measure by surprise. He had merely wished to gain tolerance by his courtesy; and, behold! his youth, his beauty, and budding glory, had inspired love! "Now," said Anzoleto, with the rapid perception which heads of his wonderful organization enjoy, "there is nothing but to make myself feared, if to-morrow I would not be ridiculous. But how shall a poor devil like myself accomplish this with a haughty beauty like Corilla?" He was soon decided. He began a system of distrust, jealousy, and bitterness, of which the passionate coquetry astonished the prima donna. Their conversation may be resumed as follows:—

Anzoleto—"I know that you do not love me—that you will never love me; therefore am I sad and constrained beside you."

Corilla—"And suppose I were to love you?"

Anzoleto—"I should be wretched, because that were to fall from heaven into the abyss, and lose you perchance an hour after I had gained you, at the price of all my future happiness."

Corilla—"And what makes you think me so inconstant?"

Anzoleto—"First, the want of desert on my part; second, the ill that is said of you."

Corilla—"And who dares to asperse me?"

Anzoleto—"Everybody, because everybody adores you."

Corilla—"Then, if I were mad enough to like you, and to tell you so, would you repel me?"

Anzoleto—"I know not if I should have the power to fly; but if I had, I know that I should never behold you again."

"Very well," said Corilla, "I have a fancy to try the experiment—Anzoleto, I love you."

"I do not believe it," replied he. "If I stay, it is because I think you are only mocking me. That is a game at which you shall not frighten me, and still less shall you pique me."

"You wish to try an encounter of wit, I think."

"No, indeed; I am not in the least to be dreaded, since I give you the means of overcoming me; it is to freeze me with terror, and drive me from your presence, in telling me seriously what you have just now uttered in jest."

"You are a knowing fellow, and I see that one must be careful what one says to you. You are one of those who not only wish to breathe the fragrance of the rose, but would pluck and preserve it. I could not have supposed you so bold and so decided at your age."

"And do you despise me therefore?"

"On the contrary, I am the more pleased with you. Good night, Anzoleto; we shall see each other again."

She held out her white hand, which he kissed passionately. "I have got off famously," said he, as he escaped by the passages leading from the canaletto.

Despairing of gaining access to his nest at so late an hour, he thought he would lie down at the first porch, to gain the heavenly repose which infancy and poverty alone know; but, for the first time in

his life, he could not find a slab sufficiently smooth for his purpose. The pavement of Venice is the cleanest and whitest in the world; still, the light dust scattered over it hardly suited a dark dress of elegant material and latest fashion. And then the propriety of the thing! The boatmen who would have carefully stepped over the young plebeian in the morning, would have insulted him, and perhaps soiled his parasitic livery during his repose. What would they have thought of one reposing in the open air in silk stockings, fine linen, and lace ruffles? Anzoleto regretted his good woollen *capa*, worn and old no doubt, but thick and well calculated to resist the unhealthy morning fogs of Venice. It was now towards the latter end of February; and, although the days at this period were warm and brilliant, the nights at Venice were still very cold. Then he thought he would gain admission into one of the gondolas fastened to the bank, but they were all secured under lock and key. At last he found one of which the door yielded; but in getting in, he stumbled over the legs of the barcarole, who had retired for the night. "*Per diavolo!*" said a rough voice from the bottom of the cabin, "who are you, and what do you want?"

"Is it you, Zanetto?" replied Anzoleto, recognizing the man, who was generally very civil to him; "let me stretch myself beside you, and dream a while within your cabin."

"And who are you?" said Zanetto.

"Anzoleto: do you not know me?"

"*Per diavolo*, no! You have garments which Anzoleto never wore, unless he stole them. Be off! Were you the Doge in person, I would not open my bark to a man who strutted about in fine clothes when he had not a corner to rest in."

"So, so," thought Anzoleto; "the protection and favor of Count Zustiniani have exposed me to greater dangers and annoyances than they have procured me advantages. It is time that my fortune should correspond with my success, and I long to have a few sequins to enable me to support the station which I have assumed."

Sufficiently out of sorts, he sauntered through the deserted streets, not daring to pause a moment, lest the perspiration should be checked which anger and fatigue had caused to flow freely forth. "It is well, I do not grow hoarse," said he to himself; "to-morrow the count will show me off to some foolish Aristarchus, who, if I have the least feather in the throat in consequence of this night's want of rest, will say that I have no voice; and the Signor Count, who knows better, will repeat, 'If you had but heard him last night!' 'He is not equal, then,' the other will observe; 'or perhaps he is not in good health;' or perhaps,' as a third will aver, 'he was tired last night. The truth is, he is very young to sing several days in succession. Had you not better wait till he is riper and more robust?' And the count will say, 'Diavolo! if he grows hoarse after a couple of songs, he will not answer me.' Then, to make sure that I am strong and well, they will make me exercise every day till I am out of breath, and break my voice to prove that I have lungs. To the devil with their protection, I say! Ah! if I were only free of these great folk, and in favor with the public, and courted by the theatres, I could sing in their saloons, and treat with them as equal powers."

Thus plotting, Anzoleto reached one of those little spots termed *corti* in Venice. Courts indeed they were not, but an assemblage of houses opening on a common space, corresponding with what in Paris

is called *cite*. But there is nothing in the disposition of these pretended courts like the elegant and systematic arrangements of our modern squares. They are obscure spots, sometimes impassable, at other times allowing passage; but little frequented, and dwelt in by persons of slender fortune — laborers, workmen, or washerwomen who stretch their linen across the road, somewhat to the annoyance of the passengers, who put up with it in return for permission to go across. Woe to the poor artist who is obliged to open the windows of his apartment in these secluded recesses, where rustic life, with its noisy, unclean habits, re-appears in the heart of Venice, not two steps from large canals and sumptuous edifices! Woe to him if silence be necessary to his occupation! for, from morn till night, there is an interminable uproar, with children, fowls, and dogs, screaming and playing within the narrow space, the chatter of women in the porches, and the songs of workmen, which do not leave him a moment of repose. Happy, too, if *improvisatori* do not bawl their sonnets till they have gathered a coin from every window; or Brighella do not fix her station in the court, ready to begin her dialogue afresh with the "*avocato, il tedesco, e il diavolo*," until she has exhausted in vain her eloquence before the dirty children—happy spectators, who do not scruple to listen and to look on, although they have not a farthing in their possession.

But at night, when all is silent, and when the quiet moon lights up the scene, this assemblage of houses of every period, united to each other without symmetry or pretension, divided by deep shadows full of mystery in their recesses, and of a wild spontaneous beauty, presents an infinitely picturesque assemblage. Everything is beautiful under the light of the moon. The least architectural effect assumes force and character, and the meanest balcony, with its clustering vine, reminds you of Spain and of romantic adventures with the cloak and sword. The clear atmosphere in which the distant cupolas rising above the dark mass are bathed, sheds on the minutest details of the picture a vague yet harmonious coloring, which invites one to reveries without end.

It was in the Corte Minelli, near the church of San Fantin, that Anzoleto found himself when the clocks of the different churches tolled the hour of two. A secret instinct had led his devious steps to the dwelling of one of whom he had not thought since the setting of the sun. Hardly had he entered the court, when he heard a sweet voice call him by the last syllables of his name; and raising his head he saw for an instant a faint profile shadow itself on one of the most miserable abodes of the place. A moment afterwards a door opened, and Consuelo, in a muslin petticoat and wrapped in an old black silk mantle which had served as adornment for her mother, extended one hand to him, while at the same time she placed her finger on her lip to enforce silence. They crept up the ruined stair, and seated at length on the terrace, they began one of those long whispering conversations, interrupted by kisses, which one hears by night along the level roofs, like the converse of wandering spirits wafted through the mist, amidst the strange chimneys, hooded with red turbans, of all the houses of Venice.

"How, my poor friend," said Anzoleto; "have you waited for me until now?"

"Did you not say you would give me an account of the evening, and tell me if you sang well—if you afforded pleasure—if they applauded you—if they signed your engagement?"

"And you, my best Consuelo," said Anzoleto, struck with remorse on seeing the confidence and sweetness of this poor girl, "tell me if my long absence has made you impatient—if you are not tired—if you do not feel chill on this cold terrace—if you have already supped—if you are not angry with me for coming so late—if you are uneasy—if you found fault with me."

"No such thing," she replied, throwing her arms about his neck. "If I have been impatient, it was not with you; if I felt wearied—if I was cold—I am no longer so, since you are here. Whether I have supped or not, I do not know; whether I have found fault with you?—why should I find fault with you?—if I have been disquieted?—why should I have been so?—if I have been angry with you?—never!"

"You are an angel!" said Anzoleto, returning her caress. "Ah, my only consolation! how cold and perfidious are all other hearts!"

"Alas! what has happened!—what have they done to the son of my soul?" exclaimed Consuelo, mixing with the sweet Venetian dialect the passionate expressions of her native tongue.

Anzoleto told her all that had happened — even to his gallantries with Corilla, and more especially the encouragement which she held out to him; only he smoothed matters over somewhat, saying nothing that could vex Consuelo, since in point of fact he had been faithful—and he told *almost* all. But there is always some minute particle of truth on which judicial inquiry has never thrown light—which no client has revealed to his advocate—which no sentence has ever aimed at except by chance—because in these few secret facts or intentions is the entire cause, the motive, the aim—the object in a word—of these great suits, always so badly pleaded and always so badly judged, whatever may be the ardor of the speakers or the coolness of the magistrate.

To return to Anzoleto. It is not necessary to say what pecadilloes he omitted, what emotions in public he translated in his own fashion, what secret palpitations in the gondola he forgot to mention. I do not think he even spoke of the gondola at all, and as to his flatteries at the cantatrice, why they were adroit mystifications by means of which he escaped her perilous advances without making her angry. Wherefore, being unwilling, and I may add unable, to mention all the temptations which he had surmounted by his prudence and caution, why, dear lady reader, should the young rogue awaken jealousy in the bosom of Consuelo? Happily for the little Spaniard she knew nothing of jealousy. This dark and bitter feeling only afflicts souls that have greatly suffered, and hitherto Consuelo had been happy in her affection as she was good. The only thing that made a profound impression upon her was the severe yet flattering denunciation of Professor Porpora on the adored head of Anzoleto. She made him repeat all the expressions which the maestro had used, and when he had done so, pondered on them long and earnestly.

"My little Consuelo," said Anzoleto without remarking her abstraction, "it is horribly cold here. Are you not afraid of getting cold? Think, my dear, that our prospects depend much more upon your voice than mine."

"I never get cold," said she; "but you are so lightly dressed with your fine clothes. Here now, put on this mantle."

"What would you have me do with this fine bit of torn taffeta? I would rather take shelter for half an hour in your apartment."

"'Tis well," said Consuelo, "but then we must not speak; the neighbors would hear us, and we should be to blame. They are not ill disposed; they see us together without tormenting me about it, because they know very well you do not come here at night. You would do better to sleep at home."

"Impossible! They will only open at daylight, and there are still three hours to watch. See, my teeth chatter with the cold!"

"Well," said Consuelo, getting up, "I shall let you into my room and return to the terrace, so that if anybody should observe it, it will be seen there is nothing wrong."

She brought him into a dilapidated apartment, where, under flowers and frescoes on the wall, appeared a second picture, almost in a worse condition than the first. A large square bed with a mattress of sea-weed, and a spotted muslin coverlet, perfectly clean but patched with fragments of every imaginable color; a straw chair, a little table, an antique guitar, a filagree cross—the only wealth her mother had left—a spinet, a great heap of worm-eaten music, which Professor Propora was kind enough to lend—such was the furniture of the young artist, daughter of a poor Bohemian, the pupil of a celebrated master, and sweetheart of a handsome adventurer. As there was but one chair, and as the table was covered with music, there was no seat for Anzoleto but the bed, on which he placed himself without hesitation. Hardly was he seated, when overwhelmed with fatigue, his head fell upon the woolen cushion which served as a pillow; but almost immediately starting up again by a violent effort, he exclaimed—

"And you, my poor girl! are you going to take no rest? Ah! I am a wretch—I shall go and lie in the streets."

"No," said Consuelo, gently thrusting him back; "you are ill and I am not. My mother died a good Catholic; she is now in heaven, and sees us at this very hour. She knows you have kept the promise you made to her, never to abandon me. She knows that our affection has been pure since her death as before. She sees at this moment that I neither do nor think what is wrong—that her soul may repose in the Lord!" And here Consuelo made the sign of the cross. Anzoleto already slumbered. "I am going to tell my beads," continued Consuelo, moving away, "that you may not take the fever."

"Angel that you are!" faintly murmured Anzoleto, and he did not even perceive that he was alone. She had gone, in fact, to the terrace. In a short time she returned to assure herself that he was not ill, and, finding that he slept tranquilly, she gazed long and earnestly at his beautiful face, as it lay lighted by the moon.

Then, determined to resist drowsiness herself, and finding that the emotions of the evening had caused her to neglect her work, she lighted the lamp, and, seated before the little table, she noted a composition which Master Porpora had required of her for the following day.

CHAPTER VI.

THE Count Zustiniani, notwithstanding his philosophical composure was not so indifferent to the insolent caprices of Corilla as he pretended. Good-natured, weak, frivolous, Zustiniani was only a rake in appearance and by his social position. He could not help feeling at the bottom of his heart the ungrateful return which this insolent and foolish girl had made to his generosity; and though at that period it was considered the worst possible taste, as well at Venice as at Paris, to seem jealous, his Italian pride revolted at the absurd and miserable position in which Corilla had placed him. So, the same afternoon that had seen Anzoleto shine at the Palazzo Zustiniani, the count, after having laughed with Barberigo over the tricks of Corilla, his saloons being emptied and the wax-lights extinguished, took down his cloak and sword, and, in order to ease his mind, set off for the palazzo inhabited by his mistress.

He found that she was alone, but still doubted her. He began to converse in a low voice with the barcarole who was mooring the gondola of the prima donna under the arch reserved for that purpose; and, by virtue of a few sequins, he easily convinced himself that he was not mistaken, and that Corilla had not been alone in the gondola; but who it was that had accompanied her he could not ascertain—the gondolier knew not. He had met Anzoleto a hundred times in the passages of the theatre, or near the Palazzo Zustiniani, but failed to recognise him when powdered and in his dark attire.

This inscrutable mystery completed the count's annoyance. He consoled himself with ridiculing his rival, the only vengeance which good breeding permitted, and not less cruel in a gay and frivolous age than murder at more serious periods. He could not sleep; and at the hour when Porpora began his instructions, he set out for the *Scuola di Mendicanti*, and the hall where the young pupils were wont to assemble.

The position of the count with regard to the learned professor was for some years past much changed. Zustiniani was no longer the musical antagonist of Porpora, but in some sort his associate and leader. He had advanced considerable sums to the establishment over which the learned maestro presided, and out of gratitude the directors had invested him with the supreme control. The two associates then were as good friends as could be expected from the intolerance of the maestro with regard to the music in vogue—an intolerance, however, which was considerably softened by the assistance and resources lavished by the count in behalf of the propagation of serious music. Besides, the latter had brought out at San Samuel an opera which the maestro had written.

"My dear master," said Zustiniani, drawing Porpora aside, "you must not only give me one of your pupils for the theatre, but say which of them is best calculated to replace Corilla. That artist is worn out, her voice has decayed, her caprices ruin us, and the public will be disgusted. Truly, we must obtain a *succeditrice*." Pardon, dear reader, for this was said in Italian, and the count made no mistake.

"I have not got what you require," replied Porpora, dryly.

"What! my dear maestro," exclaimed the count, "you are not going to fall back into your dark moods? Is it after all the sacrifices and all the devotion which I have manifested towards you, that you are going to deny me a slight favor when I ask your assistance and advice in my own behalf?"

"I should not be justified in doing so," replied the professor, "and what I have just said is the truth, told you by a friend, and with the desire to oblige you. I have not in my school a single person capable

of replacing Corilla. I do not estimate her higher than she deserves yet in declaring that the talent of this girl has no real worth in my eyes, I am forced to acknowledge that she possesses an experience, a skill, a facility, and a sympathy with the public, which can only be acquired by years of practice, and which could not be obtained by other debutantes for a long time."

"That is true," said the count; "but we made Corilla, we saw her begin, we procured the approbation of the public; her beauty gained her three-fourths of her success, and you have individuals equally agreeable in your school. You cannot deny that, master. Come, admit that Clorinda is the most beautiful creature in the universe."

"Yes, but saucy, simpering, intolerable.—The public perhaps may find her grimaces charming—but she sings false, she has neither soul nor intelligence. It is true that the public has only ears; but then she has neither memory nor address, and she could only save herself from condemnation by the happy charlatanism that succeeds with so many others."

Thus saying, the professor cast an involuntary glance upon Anzoleto, who, under favor of the count, and on pretence of listening to the class, had kept a little apart, attending to the conversation.

"It matters not," said Zustiniani, who heeded little the master's rancour; "I shall not give up my project. It is long since I have heard Clorinda. Let her come with five or six others, the prettiest that can be found. Come, Anzoleto," said he, smiling, "you are well enough attired to assume the grave air of a young professor. Go to the garden and speak to the most striking of these young beauties, and tell them that the professor and I expect them here."

Anzoleto obeyed, but whether through malice or address, he brought the ugliest, so that then Jacques might have said for once with truth, "Sofia was one-eyed, and Cattina was a cripple."

This *quid pro quo* was taken in good part: and after they had laughed in their sleeves, they dismissed them, in order to send those of their companions whom the professor named. A charming group soon made their appearance, with Clorinda at their head.

"What magnificent hair!" exclaimed the count, as the latter passed him with her superb tresses.

"There is much more *on* than *in* that head," said the professor, without deigning to lower his voice.

After an hour's trial, the count could stand it no longer, but with courteous expressions to the young ladies, retired full of consternation, after saying in the professor's ear, "we must not think of these cockatoos!"

"Would your Excellency permit me to say a word respecting the subject which occupies you," said Anzoleto in a low voice to the count as they descended the steps.

"Speak," said the count; "do you know this marvel whom we seek?"

"Yes, Excellenza."

"In what sea will you fish up this precious pearl?"

"At the bottom of the class, where the jealous Porpora places her on the day when you pass your female battalion in review."

"What! is there a diamond in the school whose splendor has never reached my eyes? If Master Porpora has played me such a trick!—"

"Illustrious, the diamond of which I speak is not strictly part of the school: she is only a poor girl who sings in the choruses when they

require her services, and to whom the professor gives lessons partly through charity, but still more from love of his art."

"In that case her abilities must be extraordinary, for the professor is not easily satisfied, and in no way prodigal of his time and labor. Could I have heard her perchance without knowing it?"

"Your Excellency heard her long ago when she was but a child. Now she is a young woman—able, studious, wise as the professor himself, and capable of extinguishing Corilla on the first occasion that she sings a single air beside her in the theatre."

"Does she never sing in public? Did she not sing sometimes at vespers?"

"Formerly, your Excellency, the professor took pleasure in hearing her sing in the church: but since then the *scolari*, through jealousy and revenge, have threatened to chase her from the tribune if she reappears there by their side."

"She is a girl of bad conduct then?"

"Oh Heavens! she is a virgin, pure as the newly fallen snow! But she is poor and of mean extraction—like myself, Eccellenza, whom you yet deign to elevate by your goodness—and these wicked harpies have threatened to complain to you of bringing into their class a pupil who did not belong to it."

"Where can I hear this wonder?"

"Let your Highness order the professor to make her sing before you, and you can then judge of her voice and the amount of her talent."

"Your confidence inclines me to believe you. You say I heard her long since?—I cannot remember when."

"In the church of the Mendicanti, on a general rehearsal of the '*Salve Regina*' of Pergolese."

"Oh, I remember now," exclaimed the count; "voice, accent, and intelligence equally admirable!"

"She was then but fourteen, my lord—no better than a child."

"Yes—but now I think of it, I remember she was not handsome."

"Not handsome, Excellenza!" exclaimed Anzoleto, quite astounded.

"She was called—let me see—was it not a Spanish name?—something out of the way?"

"It was Consuelo, my lord."

"Yes, that is the name; you were to marry her then, a step which made the professor and myself laugh a little. Consuelo—yes, it is the same; the favorite of the professor, an intelligent girl, but very ugly."

"Very ugly?" repeated Anzoleto, as if stupefied.

"Yes, my child. Do you still admire her?"

"She is *mon amie*, Illustrissimo."

"*Amie!* that is to say, sister or sweetheart, which of the two?"

"Sister, my master."

In that case I can give you an answer without paining you; your idea is devoid of common sense. To replace Corilla it would require an angel of beauty, and your Consuelo, if I remember rightly, was not only ugly but frightful!"

The count was accosted at this moment by one of his friends, and left Anzoleto, who was struck dumb with amazement, and who repeated with a sigh, "She is frightful!"

CHAPTER VII.

IT may appear rather astonishing, dear reader, and yet it is very certain, that Anzoleto never had formed an opinion of the beauty or the ugliness of Consuelo. Consuelo was a being so solitary, so unknown in Venice, that no one had thought of seeking whether, beneath this veil of isolation and obscurity, intelligence and goodness had ended by showing themselves under an agreeable or insignificant form. Porpora, who had no senses but for his art, had only seen in her the artist. Her neighbors of the Corte Minelli observed, without attaching any blame to it, her innocent love for Anzoleto. At Venice they are not particular on this score. They predicted indeed very often, that she would be unhappy with this youth without business or calling, and they counselled her rather to seek to establish herself with some honest workman. But she replied to them that, as she herself was without friends or support, Anzoleto suited her perfectly, and as for six years no day had passed without their seeing them together, never seeking any concealment and never quarreling, they had ended by accustoming themselves to their free and apparently indissoluble union, and no neighbor had ever paid court to the *amica* of Anzoleto. Whether was this owing to her supposed engagement or to her extreme poverty!—or was it, perhaps, that her person had no attractions for them? This last supposition is the most probable.

Every one knows, however, that from fourteen to fifteen, girls are generally thin, out of sorts, without harmony either as to proportions or movements. Towards fifteen, to use a common expression, they undergo a sort of fusion, after which they become, if not pretty, at least agreeable. It has even been remarked that it is not desirable that a young girl should grow good-looking too early.

Consuelo, like others, had gained all the benefits of adolescence; she was no longer called ugly, simply because she had ceased to be so. As she was neither Dauphine nor infanta, however, there were no crowds of courtiers to proclaim that her royal highness grew day by day more beautiful; and no one was sufficiently solicitous to tell Anzoleto that he should have no occasion to blush for his bride.

Since Anzoleto had heard her termed ugly at an age when the word had neither sense nor meaning, he had forgotten to think about it; his vanity had taken another direction. The theatre and renown were all his care, and he had no time to think of conquests. His curiosity was appeased—he had no more to learn. At twenty-two he was in a measure *blasé*; yet his affection for Consuelo was tranquil as at eighteen, despite a few chaste kisses, taken as they were given, without shame.

Let us not be astonished at this calmness and propriety on the part of a youth in other respects not over particular. Our young people had ceased to live as described at the beginning of this history. Consuelo, now nearly sixteen, continued her somewhat wandering life, leaving the conservatory to eat her rice and repeat her lesson on the steps of the Piazzetta with Anzoleto. When her mother, worn out by fatigue, ceased to sing for charity in the coffee-houses in the evening, the poor creature sought refuge in one of the most miserable garrets of the Corte Minelli, to die upon a pallet. Then the good Consuelo

quitting her no more, entirely changed her manner of life. Exclusive of the hours when the professor deigned to give his lessons, she labored sometimes at her needle, sometimes at counter-point, but always at the bedside of her imperious and despairing mother, who had cruelly ill-treated her in her infancy, and who now presented the frightful spectacle of a last struggle without courage and without virtue. The filial piety and devotion of Consuelo never flagged for a single instant. The pleasures of youth and of her free and wandering life—even love itself—all were sacrificed without a moment's hesitation or regret. Anzoleto made bitter complaints, but finding reproaches useless, resolved to forget her and to amuse himself; but this he found impossible. He had none of the industry of Consuelo; he learned quickly but imperfectly the inferior lessons which his teacher, to gain the salary promised by Zustiniani, gave him equally quickly and equally ill. This was all very well for Anzoleto, in whom prodigal nature made up for lost time and the effects of inferior instruction, but there were hours of leisure during which the friendly and cheerful society of Consuelo were found sadly wanting. He tried to addict himself to the habits of his class; he frequented public-houses, and wasted with young scapegraces the trifling bounties he enjoyed through the favor of Count Zustiniani. This sort of life pleased him for some weeks; but he soon found that his health and his voice were becoming sensibly impaired—that the *far-niente* was not excess, and that excess was not his element. Preserved from bad passions through a higher species of self-love, he retired to solitude and study; but they only presented a frightful mixture of gloom and difficulty. He saw that Consuelo was no less necessary to his talents than to his happiness. She was studious and persevering—living in an atmosphere of music as a bird in the air, or a fish in the wave—loving to overcome difficulties without inquiring into their nature any more than a child—but impelled to combat the obstacles and penetrate the mysteries of art, by an instinct invisible as that which causes the germ to penetrate the soil and seek the air. Consuelo enjoyed one of those rare and happy temperaments for which labor is an enjoyment, a sort of repose, a necessary condition, and to which inaction would be an effort, a waste, in short, a disease—if inaction indeed to such natures were possible. But they know nothing of the kind; in apparent idleness they still labor, but it is not so much reverie as meditation. In seeing them act, one would suppose that they were creating, whereas they but give expression to what has been already created. You will tell me, gentle reader, that you have never known such rare temperaments; to which I shall reply, dearly beloved reader, that I have met with but one. If so, am I older than you? Why can I not tell you that I have analyzed in my own poor brain the divine mystery of this intellectual activity? But alas! friendly reader, it is neither you nor I who shall study this in ourselves.

Consuelo worked on, amusing herself the while. She persisted for hours together, either by free and capricious flights of song or by study on the book, to vanquish difficulties which would have repelled Anzoleto if left to himself; and without any idea of emulation or premeditated design, she forced him to follow her, to second her, to comprehend and to reply to her—sometimes, as it were, in the midst of almost childish bursts of laughter—sometimes borne away by the poetic and creative *fantasia*, which pervades the popular temperament of Italy and Spain. During the many years in which he was

influenced by the genius of Consuelo—drinking at a source which he did not comprehend—copying her without knowing it—Anzoleto, held besides in chains by his indolence, had become a strange compound of knowledge and ignorance, of inspiration and frivolity, of power and weakness, of boldness and awkwardness, such as had plunged Porpora at the last rehearsal into a perfect labyrinth of meditation and conjecture. The maestro did not know the secret of the riches he had borrowed from Consuelo; for having once severely scolded the little one for her intimacy with this great idler, he had never again seen them together.—Consuelo, bent upon maintaining the good-will of her master, took care whenever she saw him at a distance, if in company with Anzoleto, to hide herself with agile bounds behind a column, or to disappear in the recesses of some gondola.

These precautions were still continued, when, Consuelo having become a nurse, Anzoleto, unable to support her absence, and feeling life, hope, inspiration, and even existence failing him, returned to share her sedentary life, and to bear with her the sourness and angry whims of the dying woman. Some months before the close of her life, the unhappy creature, broken down by her sufferings, and vanquished by the filial piety of her daughter, felt her soul opened to milder emotions. She habituated herself to the attentions of Anzoleto, who, although little accustomed to acts of friendship and self-denial, displayed a zealous kindness and good-will towards the feeble sufferer. Anzoleto had an even temper and gentle demeanor. His perseverance towards her and Consuelo at length won her heart, and in her last moments she made them promise never to abandon each other. Anzoleto promised, and even felt in this solemn act a depth of feeling to which he had been hitherto a stranger. The dying woman made the engagement easier to him by saying:—"Let her be your friend, your sister, or your wife, only leave her not; she knows none, has listened to none, but you."

Consuelo, now an orphan, continued to ply her needle and study music, as well to procure means for the present as to prepare for her union with Anzoleto. During two years he continued to visit her in her garret, without experiencing any passion for her, or being able to feel it for others, so much did the charm of being with her seem preferable to all other things.

Without fully appreciating the lofty faculties of his companion, he could see that her attainments and capabilities were superior to those of any of the singers at San Samuel, or even to those of Corilla herself. To this habitual affection were now added the hope, and almost the conviction, that a community of interests would render their future existence at once brilliant and profitable. Consuelo thought little of the future: foresight was not among her good qualities. She would have cultivated music without any other end in view than that of fulfilling her vocation; and the community of interest which the practice of that art was to realise between her and her friend, had no other meaning to her than that of an association of happiness and affection. It was therefore without apprising her of it, that he conceived the hope of realizing their dreams; and learning that Zustiniani had decided on replacing Corilla, Anzoleto, sagaciously divining the wishes of his patron, had made the proposal which has already been mentioned.

But Consuelo's ugliness—this strange, unexpected, and invincible drawback, if the count indeed were not deceived—had struck terror and consternation to his soul. So he retraced his steps to the Corte Minelli, stopping every instant to recal to his mind in a new point of view the likeness of his friend, and to repeat again and again, "Not pretty?—ugly?—frightful?"

CHAPTER VIII.

"WHY do you stare at me so?" said Consuelo, seeing him enter her apartment, and fix a steady gaze upon her, without uttering a word. "One would think you had never seen me before."

"It is true, Consuelo," he replied; "I have never seen you."

"Are you mad?" continued she; "I know not what you mean."

"Ah, Heaven! I fear I am," exclaimed Anzoleto. "I have a dark, hideous spot in my brain, which prevents me from seeing you."

"Holy Virgin! you are ill, my friend!"

"No, dear girl; calm yourself, and let us endeavor to see clearly. Tell me, Consuelo, do you think me handsome?"

"Surely I do, since I love you."

"But if you did not love me, what would you think of me then?"

"How can I tell?"

"But when you look at other men, do you know whether they are handsome or ugly?"

"Yes; But I think you handsomer than the handsomest."

"Is it because I am so, or because you love me?"

"Both one and the other, I think. Everybody calls you handsome, and you know that you are so. But why do you ask?"

"I wish to know if you would love me were I frightful?

"I should not be aware of it, perhaps."

"Do you believe, then, that it is possible to love one who is ugly?"

"Why not, since you love me?"

"Are you ugly, then, Consuelo? Tell me truly—are you indeed ugly?"

"They have told me so—do you not see it?

"No; in truth, I see no such thing."

"In that case, I am handsome enough, and am well satisfied."

"Hold there, Consuelo. When you look at me so sweetly, so lovingly, so naturally, I think you prettier far than Corilla; but I want to know if it be an illusion of my imagination, or reality. I know the expression of your countenance; I know that it is good, and that it pleases me. When I am angry, it calms me; when sorrowful, it cheers me; when I am cast down, it revives me. But your features Consuelo, I cannot tell if they are ugly or not."

"But I ask you once more, what does it matter?"

"I must know; tell me, therefore, if it be possible for a handsome man to love an ugly woman."

"You loved my dear mother, who was no better than a spectre, and I loved her so dearly!"

"And did you think her ugly?"

"No; did you?"

"I thought nothing about it. But to love with passion, Consuelo—for, in truth, I love you passionately, do I not? I cannot live without you—cannot quit you. Is not that love, Consuelo?"

"Could it be anything else?"
"Could it be friendship?"
"Yes, it might, indeed, be friendship—"
Here the much surprised Consuelo paused and looked attentively at Anzoleto, while he, falling into a melancholy reverie, asked himself for the first time whether it was love or friendship he felt for Consuelo, or whether the moderation and propriety of his demeanor were the result of respect or indifference. For the first time he looked at the young girl with the eyes of a youth; analysed, not without difficulty, her face, her form, her eyes—all the details in fine of which he had had hitherto but a confused ideal in his mind. For the first time Consuelo was embarrassed by the demeanor of her friend. She blushed, her heart beat with violence, and she turned aside her head, unable to support Anzoleto's gaze. At last, as he preserved a silence which she did not care to break, a feeling of anguish took possession of her heart, tears rolled down her cheeks, and she hid her face in her hands.

"Oh, I see it plainly," she said; "you have come to tell me that you will no longer have me for your sweetheart."

"No, no; I did not say that—I did not say that!" exclaimed Anzoleto, terrified by the tears which he had caused her to shed for the first time; and, restored to all his brotherly feeling, he folded Consuelo in his arms. But as she turned her head aside, he kissed, in place of her calm, cool cheek, a glowing shoulder, ill-concealed by a handkerchief of black lace.

"I know not well what ails me," exclaimed Consuelo, tearing herself from his arms; "I think I am ill; I feel as if I were going to die."

"You must not die," said Anzoleto, following and supporting her in his arms; "you are fair, Consuelo—yes, you are fair!"

In truth, she was then very fair. Anzoleto never inquired how, but he could not help repeating it, for his heart felt it warmly.

"But," said Consuelo, pale and agitated, "why do you insist so on finding me pretty to-day?"

"Would you not wish to be so, dear Consuelo?"

"Yes, for you!"

"And for others too?"

"It concerns me not."

"But if it influenced our future prospects?" Here, Anzoleto, seeing the uneasiness which he caused his betrothed, told her candidly all that had occurred between the count and himself. And when he came to repeat the expressions, anything but flattering, which Zustiniani had employed when speaking of her, the good Consuelo, now perfectly tranquil, could not restrain a violent burst of laughter, drying at the same time her tear-stained eyes.

"Well?" said Anzoleto, surprised at this total absence of vanity, "do you take it so coolly? Ah! Consuelo, I can see that you are a little coquette. You know very well that you are not ugly."

"Listen," said she, smiling: "since you are so serious about trifles, I find I must satisfy you a little. I never was a coquette, and not being handsome, do not wish to seem ridiculous. But as to being ugly, I am no longer so."

"Indeed! Who has told you?"

"First it was my mother, who was never uneasy about my ugliness. I heard her often say that she was far less passable than I in her infancy, and yet when she was twenty she was the handsomest girl in Burgos. You know that when the people looked at her in the cafés where she sang, they said, 'this woman must have been once beautiful.' See, my good friend, beauty is fleeting; when its possessor is sunk in poverty it lasts for a moment, and then is no more. I might become handsome—who knows?—if I was not to be too much exhausted; if I got sound rest, and did not suffer too much from hunger."

"Consuelo, we will never part. I shall soon be rich; you will then want for nothing, and can be pretty at your ease."

"Heaven grant it; but God's will be done!"

"But all this is nothing to the purpose; we must see if the count will find you handsome enough for the theatre."

"That hard-hearted count! Let us trust that he will not be too exacting."

"First and foremost then, you are not ugly?"

"No; I am not ugly. I heard the glass-blower over the way there say not long ago to his wife—'Do you know that little Consuelo is not so much amiss. She has a fine figure, and when she laughs she fills one's heart with joy; but when she sings, oh, how beautiful she is!'"

"And what did the glass-blower's wife say?"

"She said—'What is it to you? Mind your business. What has a married man to do with young girls?'"

"Did she appear angry?"

"Oh, very angry."

"It is a good sign. She knew that her husband was not far wrong. Well, what more?"

"Why, the Countess Moncenigo, who gives out work, and has always been kind to me, said last week to Dr. Ancillo, who was there when I called—'Only look, doctor, how this *Zitella* has grown, how fair she is and how well made!'"

"And what did the doctor say?"

"'Very true, madam,' said he; '*per Bacco!* I should not have known her: she is one of those constitutions that become handsome when they gain a little fat. She will be a fine girl, you will see that.'"

"And what more?"

"Then the superior of Santa Chiara, for whom I work embroidery for the altars, said to one of the sisters—'Does not Consuelo resemble Santa Cecilia? Every time that I pray before her image I cannot help thinking of this little one, and then I pray for her that she may never fall into sin, and that she may never sing but for the church.'"

"And what said the sister?"

"The sister replied—'It is true, mother, it is quite true.' As for myself, I hastened to the church and looked at their Cecilia, which is painted by a great master, and is very, very beautiful."

"And like you?"

"A little."

"And you never told me that?"

"I never thought of it."

"Dear Consuelo, you are beautiful then?"

"I do not think so; but I am not so ugly as they said. One thing is certain—they no longer call me ugly. Perhaps they think it would give me pain to hear it."

"Let me see, little Consuelo; look at me. First, you have the most beautiful eyes in the world."

"But my mouth is large," said Consuelo, laughing, and taking up a broken piece of looking glass, which served her as a *pysche*.

"It is not very small indeed, but then what glorious teeth!" said Anzoleto; "they are as white as pearls, and when you smile you show them all."

"In that case you must say something that will make me laugh, when we are with the count."

"You have magnificent hair, Consuelo."

"Oh yes; would you like to see it?" And she loosed the pins which fastened it, and her dark shining locks fell in flowing masses to the floor.

"Your chest is broad, your waist small, your shoulders—ah, they are beautiful, Consuelo!"

"My feet," said Consuelo, turning the conversation, "are not so bad;" and she held up a little Andalusian foot, a beauty almost unknown in Venice.

"Your hand is beautiful, also," said Anzoleto, kissing for the first time the hand which he had hitherto clasped only in companionship. "Let me see your arms."

"But you have seen them a hundred times," said she, removing her long gloves.

"No; I have never seen them," said Anzoleto, whose admiration every moment increased, and he again relapsed into silence, gazing with beaming eyes on the young girl, in whom each moment he discovered new beauties.

All at once Consuelo, embarrassed by this display, endeavored to regain her former quiet enjoyment, and began to pace up and down the apartment, gesticulating and singing from time to time in a somewhat exaggerated fashion, several passages from the lyric drama, just as if she were a performer on the stage.

"Magnificent!" exclaimed Anzoleto, ravished with surprise at finding her capable of a display which she had not hitherto manifested.

"It is anything but magnificent," said Consuelo, reseating herself; "and I hope you only spoke in jest."

"It would be magnificent on the boards, at any rate. I assure you there would not be a gesture too much. Corilla would burst with jealousy, for it is just the way she gets on when they applaud her to the skies."

"My dear Anzoleto, I do not wish that Corilla should grow jealous about any such nonsense; if the public were to applaud me merely because I knew how to ape her, I would never appear before them."

"You would do better, then?"

"I hope so, or I should never attempt it."

"Very well; how would you manage?"

"I cannot say."

"Try."

"No; for all this is but a dream; and until they have decided whether I am ugly or not, we had better not plan any more fine projects. Perhaps we are a little mad just now, and after all, as the count has said, Consuelo may be frightful."

This last supposition caused Anzoleto to take his leave.

CHAPTER IX.

At this period of his life, though almost unknown to biographers Porpora, one of the best Italian composers of the eighteenth century, the pupil of Scarlatti, the master of Hasse, Farrinelli, Carfarielli, Mingotti, Salimbini, Hubert (surnamed the Porporino), of Gabrielli, of Monteni—in a word, the founder of the most celebrated school of his time—languished in obscurity at Venice, in a condition bordering on poverty and despair. Nevertheless, he had formerly been director of the conservatory of the *Ospedaletto* in the same city, and this period of his life, had been even brilliant. He had there written and produced his best operas, his most beautiful cantatas, and his finest church music. Invited to Vienna in 1728, he had there, after some effort, gained the favor of the Emperor Charles VI. Patronized at the court of Saxony, where he gave lessons to the electoral princess, Porpora from that repaired to London, where he rivalled for nine or ten years the glory of Handel, the master of masters, whose star at that period had begun to pale. The genius of the latter however obtained the supremacy, and Porpora, wounded in pride and purse, had returned to Venice to resume the direction of another conservatory. He still composed operas, but found it difficult to get them represented. His last, although written in Venice, was brought out in London, where it had no success. His genius had incurred these serious assaults, against which fortune and glory might perhaps have sustained him; but the neglect and ingratitude of Hasse, Farinelli, and Cafarielli, broke his heart, soured his character, and poisoned his old age. He is known to have died miserable and neglected in his eightieth year at Naples.

At the period when Count Zustiniani, foreseeing and almost desiring the defection of Corilla, sought to replace her, Porpora was subject to violent fits of ill-humor, not always without foundation; for if they preferred and sang at Venice the music of Jomelli, of Lotti, of Carissimi, of Gaspirini, and other excellent masters, they also adopted without discrimination the productions of Cocchi, of Buini, of Salvator Apollini, and other local composers, whose common and easy style served to flatter mediocrity. The operas of Hasse could not please a master justly dissatisfied. The worthy but unfortunate Porpora, therefore, closing his heart and ears alike to modern productions, sought to crush them under the glory and authority of the ancients. He judged too severely of the graceful compositions of Ga[illegible], and even the original fantasies of Chiozetto, a favorite composer at Venice. In short, he would only speak of Martini, Durante, Monte Verde, and Palestrina; I do not know if even Marcello and Leo found favor in his eyes. It was therefore with reserve and dissatisfaction that he received the first overtures of Zustiniani concerning his poor pupil, whose good fortune and glory he nevertheless desired to promote; for he had too much experience not to be aware of her abilities and her deserts. But he shook his head at the idea of the profanation of a genius so pure, and so liberally nurtured on the sacred manna of the old masters, and replied, "Take her if it must be so—this spotless soul, this stainless intellect—cast her to the dogs, hand her over to the brutes, for such seems the destiny of genius at the period in which we live."

This dissatisfaction, at once grave and ludicrous, gave the count a lofty idea of the merit of the pupil from the high value which the severe master attached to it.

"So, so, my dear maestro," he exclaimed, "is that indeed your opinion? is this Consuelo a creature so extraordinary, so divine?"

"You shall hear her," said Porpora, with an air of resignation, while he murmured, "it is her destiny."

The count succeeded in raising the spirits of the master from their state of depression, and led him to expect a serious reform in the choice of operas. He promised to exclude inferior productions so soon as he should succeed in getting rid of Corilla, to whose caprices he attributed their admission and success. He even dexterously gave him to understand that he would be very reserved as to Hasse; and declared that if Porpora would write an opera for Consuelo, the pupil would confer a double glory on her master in expressing his thoughts in a style which suited them, as well as realize a lyric triumph for San Samuel and for the count.

Porpora, fairly vanquished, began to thaw, and now secretly longed for the coming out of his pupil, as much as he had hitherto dreaded it from the fear that she should be the means of adding fresh lustre to the productions of his rivals. But as the count expressed some anxiety touching Consuelo's appearance, he refused to permit him to hear her in private, and without preparation.

"I do not wish you to suppose," said he, in reply to the count's questions and entreaties, "that she is a beauty. A poorly-dressed and timid girl, in presence of a nobleman and a judge—a child of the people, who has never been the object of the slightest attention—cannot dispense with some preparatory toilet. And, besides, Consuelo is one whose expression genius ennobles in an extraordinary degree. She must be seen and heard at the same time. Leave it all to me; if you are not satisfied you may leave her alone, and I shall find out means of making her a good nun, who will be the glory of the school, and the instructress of future pupils." Such, in fact, was the destiny which Porpora had planned for Consuelo.

When he saw his pupil again, he told her that she was to be heard and an opinion given of her by the count; but as she was uneasy on the score of her looks, he gave her to understand that she would not be seen—in short, that she would sing behind the organ-screen, the count being merely present at the service in the church. He advised her, however, to dress with some attention to appearance, as she would have to be presented, and though the noble master was poor, he gave her money for the purpose. Consuelo, frightened and agitated, busied for the first time in her life with attention to her person, hastened to see after her toilet and her voice. She tried the last, and found it so fresh, so brilliant, and so full, that Anzoleto, to whom she sung, more than once repeated with ecstasy, "Alas! why should they require more than that she knows how to sing?"

CHAPTER X.

On the eve of the important day, Anzoleto found Consuelo's door closed and locked; and after having waited for a quarter of an hour on the stairs, he finally obtained permission to see his friend in her festal attire, the effect of which she wished to try before him. She had on a handsome flowered muslin dress, a lace handkerchief, and powder. She was so much altered, that Anzoleto was for some moments uncertain whether she had gained or lost by the change. The hesitation which Consuelo read in his eyes was as the stroke of a dagger to her heart.

"Ah!" said she, "I see very well that I do not please you. How can I hope to please a stranger, when he who loves me sees nothing agreeable in my appearance?"

"Wait a little," replied Anzoleto. "I like your elegant figure in those long stays, and the distinguished air which this lace gives you. The large folds of your petticoat suit you to admiration, but I regret your long black hair. However, it is the fashion, and to-morrow you must be a lady."

"And why must I be a lady? For my part I hate this powder, which fades one, and makes even the most beautiful grow old before her time. I have an artificial air under all these furbelows; in short, I am not satisfied with myself, and I see you are not so either. Oh! by-the-bye, I was at rehearsal this morning, and saw Clorinda, who also was trying on a new dress. She was so gay, so fearless, so handsome, (oh! she must be happy!—you need not look twice at her to be sure of her beauty), that I feel afraid of appearing beside her before the count."

"You may be easy; the count has seen her, and has heard her too."

"And did she sing badly?"

"As she always does."

"Ah! my friend, those rivalries spoil the disposition. A little while ago, if Clorinda, who is a good girl, notwithstanding her vanity, had been spoken of unfavorably by a judge, I should have been sorry for her from the bottom of my heart; I should have shared her grief and humiliation; and now I find myself rejoicing at it! To strive, to envy, to seek to injure each other, and all that for a man whom we love not, nay! but whom we know not! I feel very low-spirited, my dear love, and it seems to me as if I were as much frightened by the idea of succeeding as by that of failing. It seems as if our happiness was coming to a close, and that to-morrow, after the trial, whatever may be the result, I shall return to this poor apartment a different person from what I have hitherto lived in it."

Two large tears rolled down over Consuelo's cheeks.

"Well, are you going to cry now?" said Anzoleto. "What can you be thinking of? You will dim your eyes, and swell your eyelids. Your eyes, Consuelo! do not spoil your eyes, which are the most beautiful feature in your face."

"Or rather the least ugly," said she, wiping away her tears. "Come, when we give ourselves up to the world we have not even the right to weep."

Her friend tried to comfort her, but she was exceedingly dejected all the rest of the day; and in the evening, when she was again alone, she brushed out the powder, uncurled her ebon hair, and sleeked it, tried on a little black silk dress, well preserved, and still nearly new, her usual Sunday garb, and regained a portion of her confidence on once more recognising herself in her mirror. Then she prayed fervently, and thought of her mother, until, melted to tears, she cried